

Director General, Tony Hall, at tony.hall@bbc.co.uk

6th July 2016

Dear Mr Hall,

The BBC Charter – An opportunity to secure a fair deal for Gaelic TV viewers

As the Scottish Government's economic and community development agency for the Highlands and Islands, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), we hope and trust the BBC Charter and the BBC Agreement will detail how BBC Alba will be enabled and resourced to evolve Gaelic broadcasting. It is hoped the BBC Charter will recognize the cultural importance of BBC Alba bringing its resources in line with those enjoyed by Welsh broadcasting. BBC Alba is a powerful contributor to the economic, social and cultural prosperity of Scotland, particularly, the Highlands and Islands.

BBC Alba enjoys circa 650,000 viewers per week, more than 10 times their core audience - 60,000 national speakers of the Gaelic language. This audience demonstrates BBC Alba's successful cultural positioning, competently servicing the established audience, and growing viewing numbers through an increased availability of high quality, attractive, contemporary content.

BBC Alba and BBC Radio nan Gaidheal are important for the Gaelic language and the economy of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and an increase in content will support further economic activity in some of the most fragile parts of the country. Gaelic television plays a key role in increasing the awareness and the status of the Gaelic language and culture and encourages up take and participation.

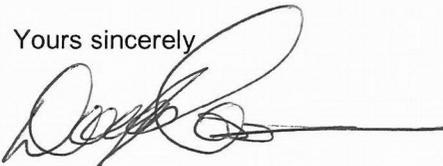
HIE seeks to support the creative industries sector in the Highlands and Islands to flourish. Production of content is an important component of that effort, delivering high quality jobs, often in our more peripheral communities, such as around the existing media cluster that has evolved in Stornoway, and on the Isle of Skye.

We would support the arguments that the future of Gaelic broadcasting needs supportive policy commitments:

- That there will be a BBC television channel, and a BBC radio station in Gaelic
- That the Gaelic television channel should be properly resourced, with the BBC showing parity of esteem and commitment for the two indigenous languages channels which it supports - BBC Alba (Gaelic) and S4C (Welsh)
- That the BBC will provide at least 10 hours per week of high quality programmes for BBC Alba, just as it does for S4C
- That the BBC's funding of BBC Alba will be a distinct corporate commitment, and not reliant on being found from BBC Scotland's already stretched budget.

Only such a commitment and quantum of BBC investment in new Gaelic programmes, will realise the full potential for significant economic, social, linguistic and cultural benefits for Scotland.

Yours sincerely



Douglas Cowan
Director of Strengthening Communities, Highlands and Islands Enterprise